

## Message Text

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ACTION SS-25

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FM AMEMBASSY PANAMA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 4423

S E C R E T PANAMA 4042

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EXDIS

E.O. 11652: XGDS

TAGS: PN, PFOR, PQ

SUBJECT: PROTEST TO PANAMA

REF: A) PANAMA 4007 B) JORDEN-BELL TELECON

ATTN: ARA/PAN BELL

SUMMARY: IN MEETING WITH PANAMANIAN AMBASSADOR GONZALEZ-REVILLA, I FILED VIGOROUS PROTEST AGAINST PUBLIC USE OF MESSAGE FROM SECRETARY KISSINGER TO GENERAL TORRIJOS--DESPITE CLEAR INJUNCTION THAT IT COULD NOT REPEAT NOT BE USED IN MEDIA. HE SAID HE UNDERSTOOD ARGUMENTS AND WOULD RELAY SAME. IN TURN, HE SAID THAT PANAMANIAN GOVERNMENT--AT MEETING WITH STUDENTS LEADERS TOMORROW--INTENDED TO LAY OUT IN FULL THE NEGOTIATING RECORD TO DATE. THEK AIM WAS TO PROVE TO CRITICS THAT GOP HAS BEEN BARGAINING HARD AND DEFENDING NATION'S INTERESTS. ALL ARGUMENTU TO AVOID THIS COURSE WERE UNAVAILING. AMBASSADOR INDICATED TORRIJOS FEELS HIS BACK IS TO THE WALL AND HE HAS TO USE ALL AMMUNITION AT HIS DISPOSAL TO HEAD OFF HIS AND OUR CRITICS; THE MOOD OF PESSIMISM REGARDING TREATY TALKS HAS DEEPENED SHARPLY HERE AND A GOP THAT HAS PLACED ITS TRUST IN THE U.S. EXECUTIVE AND THE NEGOTIATING PROCESS FEELS ITSELF AT BAY. END SUMVARY

1. AMBASSADOR GONZALEZ-REVILLA CALLED THIS MORNING TO SAY HE HAD TO SEE ME. I TOLD HIM I HAD TO SEE HIM, TOO, AND COULD HE COME TO

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LUNCH. HE AGREED. I OPENED OUR TALK BY SAYING I WAS BOTH IRRITATED

AND DISAPPOINTED THAT A COMMUNICATION I HAD DELIVERED IN CONFIDENCE--WITH THE CLEAR STATEMENT IT SHOULD NOT BE USED PUBLICLY-- WAS REPORTED ON THE FRONT PAGES THIS MORNING (REF. B.). THE COMMUNICATION WAS THE MESSAGE TO GENERAL TORRIJOS FROM SECRETARY KISSINGER RALAYED TO THE GENERAL YESTERDAY (SEE REF. A). I TOLD THE AMBASSADOR THAT THIS EXPERIENCE HAD CAST A SHADOW OVER THE WHOLE PROCESS OF CONFIDENTIAL EXCHANGES. I SAID THAT IF IT RECEIVED ANY PUBLICITY, IT WOULD CERTAINLY COMPLICATE THE SECRETARY'S RELATIONS WITH THE HILL. IT HAD WEAKENED THE POSITION OF OUR NEGOTIATORS. AND IT HAD BEEN A CONSIDERABLE EMBARRASSMENT TO ME.

2. GONZALEZ-REVILLA SAID HE APPRECIATED MY FEELINGS AND UNDERSTOOD ALL OF THE ARGUMENTS. HE SAID GENERAL TORRIJOS WAS ALSO SORRY HE HAD HAD TO DO THIS. BUT WE NEEDED TO UNDERSTAND THE SENSITIVE AND DANGEROUS POSITION THE GENERAL WAS IN AT THIS TIME. HE WAS CERTAIN THAT HIS POLITICAL SITUATION WAS, IF ANYTHING, MORE DELICATE THAN OURS. THE CANAL PROBLEM WAS NUMBER ONE FOR PANAMA. FOR US, IT WAS FAR DOWN THE LIST OF PRIORITIES. IN ORDER TO FEND OFF HEIGHTENED ATTACKS FROM EXTREMIST CRITICS, THE GENERAL HAD TO TRY TO USE ANY AMMUNITION AVAILABLE. THE MESSAGE FROM KISSINGER WAS HELPFUL IN THIS RESPECT AND ITS USE, HE FELT, WAS IN BOTH OUR INTERESTS. IT WOULD SAVE US MORE HERE THAN IT WOULD LOSE US IN WASHINGTON.

3. I SAID THAT I, TOO, UNDERSTOOD ALL THE INTELLECTUAL ARGUMENTS. BUT THIS EXPERIENCE WAS GOING TO HAVE AN EFFECT ON THE CANDOR AND OPENESS WITH WHICH I WOULD BE DEALING WITH SIMILAR MATERIALS IN THE FUTURE. I SAID I THOUGHT THIS WOULD BE A LOSS FOR BOTH SIDES. GONZALEZ-REVILLA SAID HE UNDERSTOOD AND WOULD RELAY MY THOUGHTS.

4. I THEN ASKED WHETHER THIS WAS THE SUBJECT HE HAD IN MIND WHEN HE CALLED ME. HE SAID IT WAS NOT THE MAIN ITEM, ALTHOUGH IT WAS OBVIOUSLY SOMETHING HE KNEW WOULD COME UP. HIS MAIN FOCUS WAS ON THE MEETING WITH STUDENT LEADERS TOMORROW INVOLVING TORRIJOS, MINISTER-NEGOTIATOR TACK, AMBASSADOR GONZALEZ-REVILLA AND OTHER GOP OFFICIALS. THE AMBASSADOR SAID THE SESSION WOULD BE USED TO LAY OUT IN DETAIL ALL THE PRINCIPAL ELEMENTS OF THE NEGOTIATIONS TO DATE. HE SAID TORRIJOS HAD DECIDED THAT THE ONLY WAY TO COPE WITH THE CHALLENGE OF THE LEFTIST STUDENTS WAS TO MEET IT HEAD-ON AND MAKE CLEAR THAT THE GOVERNMENT WAS NOT SELLING OUT THE COUNTRY,

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AS HAS SOMETIMES BEEN ALLEGED IN RADIO COMMENT AND UNDERGROUND NEWSPAPERS.

5. I TOLD THE AMBASSADOR I QUESTIONED THE WISDOM OF THIS COURSE. IT STRUCK AT THE WHOLE AMBIANCE OF CONFIDENTIALITY WHICH HAD MADE POSSIBLE THE SIGNIFICANT PROGRESS ALREADY ACHIEVED IN THE TREATY TALKS. HE SAID HE UNDERSTOOD THE RISKS AS DID TORRIJOS AND HIS OTHER COLLEAGUES. BUT FOUR MONTHS HAD PASSED WITH NO PROGRESS AT ALL,

AND PANAMANIAN WERE INCREASINGLY CONVINCED THAT WE HAD ONCE AGAIN--  
AS SO OFTEN OVER THE PAST 10 YEARS--RUN INTO A STALEMATE. THE  
IMPRESSION WAS WIDESPREAD THAT THE TORRIJOS GOVERNMENT, LIKE  
ITS PREDECESSORS, WAS MAKING LARGE CONCESSIONS IN A QUOTE TREATY  
AT ANY PRICE UNQUOTE APPROACH. ONLY THE RECORD OF THE DISCUSSIONS  
AND AGREEMENTS THUS FAR WOULD SERVE TO DISPEL THIS IMPRESSION.  
HE SAID HE WAS INFORMING ME OF THIS, IN ACCORDANCE WITH INSTRUCTIONS  
FROM TORRIJOS, SO WE WOULD NOT BE SURPRISED AT THE CONTENT OF  
TOMORROW'S MEETING--WHICH, INCIDENTALLY, WILL BE HELD AT THE  
MILITARY BASE AT CIMARRON. I HAVE REPORTED EARLIER OTHER ITEMS  
THAT WILL EMERGE FROM THE MEETING WITH STUDENT LEADERS (JOINING  
THE NONALIGNED WORLD: RAISING THE PANAMA ISSUE IN THE UNITED  
NATIONS--SEE REF. A).

6. FROM THE TALK WITH THE AMBASSADOR, THAT WITH TORRIJOS  
YESTERDAY, AND WITH OTHER PANAMANIAN OVER THE PAST WEEK OR SO,  
ONE SENSES AN EVIDENT DEEPENING OF PESSIMISM HERE. THE HOPE THAT  
WAS SO RAMPANT A FEW MONTHS AGO, THAT THIS LONG-VEXED QUESTION  
COULD AND WOULD AT LAST BE SOLVED, IS FAST FADING. THERE IS A  
FOREBODING THAT PANAMANIAN ASPIRATIONS ARE DOOMED TO FOUNDER ON THE  
ROCKS OF OUR DOMESTIC POLITICAL CONCERNS AND OUR PREOCCUPATIONS  
WITH OUR OTHER AREAS OF INTEREST, DOMESTIC AND FOREIGN. WE KEEP  
TYRING TO STEM THIS TREND--WITH LHE SECRETARY'S MESSAGE, VY  
STATEMENT OF LAST WEEK ON THE MIAMI HERALD ARTICLE, THE RECENT  
BUNKER SPEECH IN SEATTLE, AND OTHER EFFORTS. BUT WORDS WILL NO  
LONGER SUFFICE. TORRIJOS IS DOING WHAT HE CAN TO HOLD OFF HIS  
AND OUR CRITICS. BUT IS IS APPARENT THAT NOTHING SHORT OF GENUINE  
EFFORTS TO CONTINUE THE NEGOTIATIONS PROCESS IN A REALISTIC WAY  
WILL FORESTALL A MAJOR DIPLOMATIC DEFEAT IN THIS PART OF  
THE WORLD.

JORDEN

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